United Nations A/65/356

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 September 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Item 70 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/251, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. It provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and highlights emerging trends, their implications for humanitarian action and key challenges. In respect of key challenges, the report highlights the response to the earthquake in Haiti, the transition from relief to development and the use of information in humanitarian emergencies. It also looks at progress made in enhancing capacities for disaster preparedness, humanitarian financing, displacement and protection in situations of natural disaster, and gender mainstreaming. It concludes with a number of recommendations.

* A/65/150.

10-51028 (E) 081010

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 64/251. The period covered by the report is from 1 June 2009 to 31 May 2010, where relevant, more recent information has also been included.

II. Overview of trends and emerging challenges

A. Disaster data, 2009

2. In 2009, 328 disasters associated with natural hazards, affecting approximately 113 million people and causing more than 10,000 deaths, were recorded by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. The estimated economic damage related to disasters averaged between $35 billion and $50 billion. The largest absolute economic losses were in China, Europe and the United States of America. However, the relative economic impact of disasters was greatest in low- and middle-income countries.

3. Globally, hydrometeorological hazards, meaning hazards of an atmospheric, hydrological or oceanographic nature, caused 92 per cent of the disasters in 2009, consistent with the trends observed over recent years. Floods were the most common type of disaster recorded (147), followed by storms (84) and landslides (30). Asia was the region most affected by disasters associated with natural hazards. Forty per cent of such recorded disasters occurred in Asia, including 68 per cent of disaster-related deaths and 34 per cent of economic losses.

B. The evolving nature of disaster risk

4. Compared to the average number of disasters per year (392 events) and the average annual death toll (85,541) recorded by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters for the period from 2000 to 2008, 2009 witnessed fewer such events and related deaths. However, longer-term statistics indicate an increasing trend in the number of recorded disasters, from around 200 to around 400 events per year, over the past 20 years. Research also shows that the cumulative impact of smaller, local events triggered by natural hazards may actually be greater in some countries than that of the smaller number of formally recorded larger-scale disasters.

5. While some of the increase in the number of recorded disasters may be attributable to improvements in reporting, the risk of disasters has clearly been rising, owing to more frequent and intense weather-related hazards and greater numbers of people living in exposed coastal and urban areas. Furthermore, vulnerability to natural hazards and the resilience of communities affected by them is being impacted by such global challenges as climate change, extreme poverty, the food and economic crises, water and energy scarcity, migration, population growth, urbanization and pandemics.

6. In order to respond more effectively and equitably, the humanitarian system must undergo a shift in its approach, from one that is "shock-driven" to one that is more needs-based and vulnerability-led. This should be done on the basis of

coordinated risk assessments and by defining clearer triggers for early response, improving the monitoring and analysis of acute vulnerability, assessing existing local and national response capacities and establishing stronger links to early warning systems. This requires effective partnerships with Governments, communities, development partners and organizations that have the capability to analyse global trends and their impact on vulnerability.

7. Among the various global challenges, climate change is increasingly acknowledged as a major driver of disaster risk, first, by increasing the frequency and/or severity of weather- and climate-related hazards and, second, by simultaneously increasing the vulnerability of communities to natural hazards. However, the effects of climate change may have consequences that are more far-reaching, creating new humanitarian caseloads as countries struggle to adapt to the changing distribution of resources and to such potential secondary effects as displacement, migration and violent conflict. Adapting to those effects will require an integrated, multi-hazard risk management approach that would strengthen preparedness and early warning systems and the resilience of vulnerable populations.

8. Rapid urbanization is also exacerbating the vulnerability of city dwellers, particularly the urban poor, to the impacts of disasters. More than half of the world's population currently live in urban areas. Over 1 billion live in urban slums, where they are often highly exposed and vulnerable to hazards. Eight of the world's 10 most populous cities are located in areas at high risk of earthquakes, and 6 are located in coastal areas. A number of challenges face humanitarian actors operating in urban areas, including fostering effective collaboration with a multitude of organizations and defining target communities, which are often fragmented, highly mobile and sometimes inaccessible.

9. Finally, natural disasters may, and reportedly have in some instances, led to violations of human rights. These include gender-based violence, including sexual violence, violations of housing, land and property rights, of rights concerning personal documentation and status and of the rights of internally displaced persons. The poor, in particular women and girls, are most affected since they face increased inequality and discrimination following disasters because of limited access to resources that are essential in disaster preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation.

III. Year in review (1 June 2009-31 May 2010)

A. Climate-related hazard events

10. The Horn of Africa continued to be in the grip of a severe and prolonged drought, contributing to an acute need for humanitarian assistance. Recurrent drought and food insecurity affected approximately 4.5 million people in Eritrea and 5.2 million in Ethiopia. The drought also contributed to a significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Djibouti and Kenya, and exacerbated problems in Somalia.

11. From June to October 2009, devastating floods in several West African countries affected more than 770,000 people and killed 193. Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone were the most affected countries. The region was also affected by drought. Poor rainfall devastated agriculture and pastoral production in Chad and in the Niger, causing 2.5 million and 7.8 million

people, respectively, to suffer from severe or moderate food insecurity. The Niger in particular continues to be in the grip of a protracted food crisis.

12. In Southern Africa, the 2010 cyclone season, lasting from January to May, led to significant flooding in some high-risk areas in Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, affecting a total of 360,000 people.

13. In November 2009, Hurricane Ida caused severe flooding and landslides in El Salvador, leaving 75,000 people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. In Guatemala, drought contributed to a protracted food insecurity crisis in early 2010, which, combined with the impacts of the world economic downturn, particularly exacerbated the vulnerability of the poorer populations.

14. Three consecutive typhoons (Ketsana, Parma and Mirinae) struck the Philippines in September and October 2009, affecting over 10 million people, of which an estimated 700,000 were displaced. Despite a robust response by the Government, the magnitude, sequence and impact of the typhoons overstretched national capacities, leading the Government to appeal for international humanitarian assistance. Typhoon Ketsana went on to affect Viet Nam, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, killing more than 200 people. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the typhoon caused devastation in southern provinces. A total of 178,000 people were affected by floods and landslides.

15. In July 2009, landslides and flooding in northern Myanmar killed 24 and affected a further 1,300 people. In October, heavy rainfall in Nepal caused floods and landslides, which killed 62 people and affected 20,000 families. In late 2009, early 2010, Mongolia was affected by a *dzud* — a disaster in which a summer drought, resulting in insufficient production of hay, is followed by very heavy winter snow, winds and lower-than-normal temperatures. The rural population suffered severely, with many herders losing from 50 to 70 per cent of their livestock.

16. The north-eastern region of the Syrian Arab Republic experienced its third consecutive year of drought. According to Government and United Nations estimates, 1.3 million people have been affected, with the impact of high food and fuel prices and the global financial crisis exacerbating the situation. In response, a Syrian Arab Republic drought response plan was launched in August 2009 in order to address humanitarian needs and reduce the impact of the drought on the most vulnerable.

B. Geological hazard events

17. The most significant disaster of the reporting period was the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010, in which more than 220,000 people were killed. The earthquake and the relief and recovery efforts that followed are a major focus of the present report and are covered in paragraphs 22 to 33 below.

18. On 29 September 2009, a submarine earthquake triggered a tsunami that caused substantial damage and loss of life in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga. A total of 143 people were killed in Samoa and 9 in Tonga. Overall, more than 6,000 people were affected. On 30 September, a powerful earthquake struck the western coast of Sumatra in Indonesia, near the city of Padang. This was followed by another two earthquakes, which triggered landslides. In total, 1,117 people were killed.

19. On 27 February 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred off the coast of Chile. It was one of the strongest earthquakes ever measured and triggered a tsunami, which devastated several coastal towns in southern-central Chile. Over 1.8 million people were affected, and 486 people were killed. In China, on 13 April, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Qinghai Province. Official figures have reported 2,200 people dead, 12,135 people injured and 70 missing. In both events, the national Governments responded by rapidly deploying relief and assessment teams, temporary shelter material, food, medicine and water to the affected areas.

C. Epidemics

20. On 25 April 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the emergence and rapid spread of a novel influenza, the A (H1N1) virus. As at 31 May 2010, the virus was reported to have affected populations in more than 214 countries and territories. The death toll related directly to the H1N1 influenza pandemic has been reported at over 18,000. This is likely a serious underestimate, even though the pandemic never reached the proportions feared at an earlier stage.

21. During the reporting period, United Nations agencies and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continued to coordinate efforts in order to prepare for and respond to the H1N1 influenza pandemic through a "humanitarians in pandemic" working group and a humanitarian pandemic preparedness operations committee. Agencies also shared tools and guidelines to ensure harmonized messages to Governments and communities. Most important, however, are the efforts of Governments and their relevant partners, including to ensure (a) that there is continued vigilance for possible changes; (b) that persons in need can access resources for prevention, vaccines and medical care; (c) that communications are as effective as possible; and (d) that countries and communities seeking help with readiness and continuity planning can obtain it. Such interventions are essential not only in respect of the H1N1 pandemic but also in order to strengthen preparedness for future pandemics and hazards.

IV. Key challenges

A. The earthquake in Haiti: the response and lessons learned

22. On 12 January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti. Its epicentre was 17 km south-west of the capital Port-au-Prince, near the town of Léogâne. The Government of Haiti reported a death toll exceeding 220,000 and 300,000 injuries. At least 1.3 million people currently live in temporary shelters because of damage to their homes. According to the Government, 2 million people have been directly affected by the earthquake and at least a third of the Haitian population continues to be indirectly affected by the displacement and economic disruption resulting from the earthquake. The economic damage has been estimated by the post-disaster needs assessment — conducted under the direction of the Government of Haiti, with the technical support of the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Bank and the European Commission — to have exceeded Haiti's gross domestic product in 2009.

23. The effects of the disaster have been compounded by the entrenched problems that have faced Haiti for decades, including chronic poverty and weak systems for providing basic health care, water, sanitation and education. Before the earthquake, 55 per cent of the population lived on less than $1.25 per day, and rapid and unregulated urbanization, accompanied by poor building quality, had caused very high population density in precarious neighbourhoods throughout Port-au-Prince and in nearby towns. Furthermore, the country has also been prone to hydrometeorological natural disasters, including extensive flooding and storms on an almost annual basis.

24. The multilateral response to the disaster was rapid and on a large scale. A total of 67 urban search and rescue teams rescued a total of 134 people, the highest number of live rescues by international search and rescue teams ever recorded. Medical assistance was provided to over 40,000 survivors, including an estimated 4,000 persons needing amputation. To date, approximately 4 million people have received food assistance; emergency shelter materials have been distributed to 1.5 million households; safe water has been made available to 1.2 million people; and 1 million people have benefited from cash-for-work programmes. In camps and spontaneous settlements, basic services such as health clinics, educational support, and water and sanitation facilities have been provided, while joint patrolling by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Haitian police has been helping to protect the most vulnerable. In rural areas, over 142,000 farming families have been supported with critical inputs for the spring planting.

25. The humanitarian operation was supported by a flash appeal for $562 million (later revised to $577 million) for six months. The appeal was launched on 15 January and was 100 per cent funded. The amount of the appeal was later revised to $1.5 billion, to cover requirements until December 2010. As at July 2010, coverage of the appeal was around 65 per cent. In addition, donors have provided a further $2.2 billion to the international humanitarian community in the overall response to the earthquake, according to a six-month report of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti", which was presented to Member States at the humanitarian affairs segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council. However, a significant proportion of this, probably around 50 per cent, is in fact destined for longer-term reconstruction.

26. While the national and international response to the earthquake was remarkable in many ways, there are clear lessons to be learned in order to improve humanitarian assistance in the country and in future large-scale operations. It is also important that, once learned, these lessons are acted upon.

27. In the initial phase of the operation in Haiti, the engagement of the international humanitarian community with civil society and local authorities, and their inclusion in common coordination mechanisms, could have been stronger. The international humanitarian community should have been more attuned to local civil society concerns and capacities and to the wishes of the people whose lives had been destroyed by the earthquake. A more systematic manner of engagement would have significantly improved the humanitarian community's understanding of the environment in which it was working and contributed to a more sustainable provision of assistance, as well as to local and national capacity-building.

28. Strong, decisive and empowered humanitarian leadership on the ground at all levels is essential to the effective functioning of a response operation, regardless of the often chaotic circumstances that attend the early phases of an operation, such as

in Haiti, where so much local capacity had been destroyed or disrupted. With strong and experienced leadership, including within the cluster working groups, providing the required strategic vision, the operational response becomes more efficient, effective and coherent.

29. The operation in Haiti has proved to be exceptionally complex, involving the presence of many different actors with varying agendas, levels of competency and experience. In order to prevent an already overburdened coordination system from becoming blocked by the sheer number of responders, as well as by inappropriate relief goods, better ways of certifying the capabilities, capacities and experience of relief organizations need to be considered, and better guidance needs to be given to bilateral donors in advance.

30. Coherent and commonly agreed humanitarian coordination mechanisms are critical from the outset. They must engage all those contributing to the relief effort, including the military and the private sector and provide better linkages to developmental partners and programmes. The global humanitarian architecture should be critically reviewed to ensure that it is not implemented in such a way as to preclude such partnerships, which are critical to the most effective response.

31. The operation in Haiti has shown that further attention should be given to risk reduction and emergency preparedness, including joint risk assessments analysing potential hazards, vulnerabilities and existing response capacities. Moreover, more needs to be done to identify the most vulnerable in a disaster operation and to distinguish between those affected by the disaster and those — the majority of the population in Haiti — suffering from chronic poverty. It is also essential to strengthen the linkages between relief operations and longer-term recovery and development agendas, and between humanitarian appeals and post-disaster needs assessments. Last, the humanitarian community should continue to review how it adapts to urban responses and to identify the necessary expertise, tools, knowledge and partnerships to enable it to operate effectively in such contexts.

32. Despite the remarkable achievements of the humanitarian community in Haiti to date, considerable challenges remain, which may be further exacerbated by potential hurricanes striking the country. There is a compelling need not only to maintain existing levels of humanitarian assistance but also for a cooperative effort with the Government, the private sector and the international community to further strengthen basic services in the communities. Priorities include active investment and employment policies and building risk and disaster management measures into the reconstruction process.

33. In order to strengthen the coordination and accountability of humanitarian personnel in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in the aftermath of the disaster, the Emergency Relief Coordinator called for greater coordination of collective actions and deployed a coordinator to Haiti to guide a comprehensive programme on such prevention and the response to victims. The programme is being undertaken hand-in-hand with MINUSTAH, the United Nations and the non-governmental organization community and aims at establishing community-based mechanisms for reporting complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse by staff and partners. A recently completed inter-agency review has highlighted the need for coordinated action on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in all emergency response situations.

B. Strengthening the transition from relief to development

34. Managing the transition from relief to development is a critical concern in post-disaster settings. Experience has increasingly shown that, if adequately managed, the post-disaster recovery phase provides an important opportunity to reduce vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance. Early recovery aims to initiate nationally owned and coordinated recovery processes during the progress of relief operations and the planning of longer-term recovery projects. It helps communities to become self-reliant and individuals to resume their livelihoods, return home, rebuild local infrastructure, feel safe and regain a sense of normalcy; it is the first step towards full recovery. Each recovery and reconstruction process is usually conducted in parallel with humanitarian relief operations. It is therefore important to recognize that the notion of "transition" can be misleading.

35. For example, after Cyclone Aila hit Bangladesh in May 2009, an early recovery programme was developed to help to restore livelihoods. It included a cash-for-work component that complemented the spontaneous recovery efforts of affected families, creating approximately 37,400 work days, and helped to restore roads and other essential community infrastructures. Just a week after the earthquake in Haiti, a cash-for-work project was launched; by April 2010, it had provided some 88,000 Haitians with work. The programme gave those affected by the earthquake an opportunity to earn money and contribute to their own recovery, reviving the local economy as they procured goods and services. At the same time, it helped to restore basic services, including roads, markets, water and sanitation networks, schools and community centres.

36. Although the United Nations system continues to work to strengthen its efforts in support of national Governments in transition settings, effective transition continues to be limited by gaps in strategy, capacity and financing. However, during the reporting period, steady progress was made to improve the effectiveness of the system in a transition context.

37. The strategy gap is being addressed through a number of initiatives. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery was established in 2005 and works to strengthen early recovery capacity on a predictable basis, to promote national and local ownership and engagement and to lay the foundations for longer-term recovery and development. Membership of the Group has grown significantly over past years, particularly in terms of non-governmental organization engagement. Of the 31 members, 10 are non-governmental organizations. Increased efforts at mainstreaming early recovery throughout all clusters have led to growing awareness of the issues by partners within and outside the United Nations system. Many agencies, non-governmental organizations and donors now recognize the importance of early recovery and of mainstreaming it into the clusters they lead and into agency programmes. Some have established dedicated posts and teams to deal with early recovery-related policy and practice.

38. The Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery has also worked to integrate early recovery into the post-disaster needs assessment and recovery framework methodology. The post-disaster needs assessment is a joint effort governed by high-level agreements between the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Group for Government-led post-disaster needs assessments and the development of prioritized recovery frameworks. It

encompasses both economic estimation of damages and human development recovery needs. Post-disaster needs assessments were conducted in several post-disaster contexts during the reporting period, including in Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Haiti, Indonesia, the Philippines and Senegal. Indonesia has introduced legislation requiring post-disaster needs assessments to inform national action plans in post-disaster settings, a positive example of national ownership over such assessment processes. Given the complex technical nature of the work, efforts continue to refine common approaches with new investments planned at the national level for the enhancement of capacities to manage post-disaster needs assessments.

39. During the reporting period, a number of key steps were taken to strengthen the early recovery capacity of the United Nations system. The Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery, through its field support missions and rapid deployment mechanism, provided guidance for several countries on the early recovery approach, coordination mechanisms, assessments, strategic planning, policy advice and sectoral programming. The efforts have resulted in an improved understanding of the early recovery approach and in stronger coordination mechanisms and strategic planning processes at the country level. They have also improved inter-cluster coordination for early recovery and brought renewed attention to areas not covered by other clusters, such as governance, livelihoods and community infrastructures. Needs and gaps have been better identified and overlaps reduced, thereby strengthening the overall response.

40. Direct country support from the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery has helped to establish early recovery coordination mechanisms in 33 countries, bringing international actors together in support of nationally owned early recovery efforts. Early recovery strategic frameworks linked to existing national frameworks have been used to identify key priorities for affected populations and to serve as advocacy tools to mobilize additional resources. A surge capacity system for the rapid deployment of experts to support resident and humanitarian coordinators and Inter-Agency Standing Committee country teams has now become operational, with a roster of some 118 professionals. A Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery standard operating procedure has been developed to guide the system activation and deployment of inter-agency teams for field support. To date, over 70 experts from the roster have been deployed.

C. Increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance through improved use of information and analysis

41. Relevant, timely and reliable information is recognized as being integral to humanitarian action in both natural disasters and complex emergencies. The ability of the international humanitarian community to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and act on key information is fundamental to effective disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Better information management and analysis benefits at-risk and affected populations. Humanitarian information management is a fast-growing field, driven by rapidly evolving technology, the 24-hour global media and the growing sophistication of early warning tools, especially in the area of natural disasters. The earthquake in Haiti highlighted the need for proper preparedness activities, without which information management responses to emergencies will be hampered by a lack of data, pre-agreed indicators and agreed procedures for conducting needs assessments.

42. While it is recognized that timely, relevant and reliable information is central to effective humanitarian coordination and response, information is increasingly also used for other aspects of humanitarian action. There is a growing need for reliable pre-crisis information to support disaster prevention and preparedness, for example through risk analysis and early warning. The need to better understand, anticipate and respond to vulnerabilities arising from the complex interaction of global challenges, such as the financial, food and energy crises, and the added uncertainty in risk profiles as a result of climate change offer added incentives to improve pre-crisis information collection and analysis. Better data collection and analysis contributes to better risk assessment and targeting of prevention and preparedness activities.

D. Strengthening the use of vulnerability and climate information in humanitarian action

43. The current humanitarian response system is primarily prompted by so-called "shock-driven" events, such as sudden-onset natural disasters or conflicts. However, trigger mechanisms are far less developed with regard to slow-onset disasters, such as droughts or crises emanating from global challenges. In order to meet humanitarian needs more equitably, it is essential to consider a shift towards a more needs-based and vulnerability-led response. Such a shift requires the international humanitarian community to develop a clearer approach to responding to situations of humanitarian need where there is no clear trigger, including through the strengthening of multi-hazard monitoring, assessment and analysis across multiple sectors.

44. A number of inter-agency activities are already contributing to better monitoring of vulnerability. The Early Warning/Early Action report of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee synthesizes real-time information from humanitarian sources on the ground and offers a tool for emergency managers to monitor persistent and emerging threats, particularly those relating to slow-onset events. A number of humanitarian actors are also employing internal vulnerability monitoring tools that analyse hazards, factors for vulnerability and response capacities at the country level by applying a range of quantitative indicators. Within the United Nations system, the development of an integrated platform for gathering and analysing real-time data to identify triggers of vulnerability, known as "Global Pulse" (formerly Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System), is already under way.

45. Such systems will need to be effectively linked to weather and climate hazard early warning systems. Advances in climate science, such as improved seasonal forecasts, and efforts to tailor information for diverse audiences, including humanitarians, can help increase the ability of Governments and humanitarian actors to take effective disaster preparedness measures. During the reporting period, the third World Climate Conference, on the theme "Climate prediction and information for decision-making", was held in Geneva from 31 August to 4 September 2009. Pursuant to its high-level declaration, the Conference decided to establish a global framework for climate services, the goal of which is to develop and provide science-based climate information and prediction for climate risk management and for adaptation to climate variability and change. The framework aims to provide better access to services needed to protect lives and livelihoods and climate-sensitive sectors, particularly in developing countries. Disaster risk management and risk reduction have been identified as key benefiting sectors for the initiative. A proposal

for the components, governance and implementation of the framework is being developed by a high-level task force and will be considered at the World Meteorological Organization Congress to be held in 2011.

E. Preparedness in information management

46. A functioning and effective information management system and information management strategy are key components of response preparedness because they contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian operations. The objective of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee task force on information management is to improve existing inter-agency processes and tools for the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information to support improved decision-making in emergencies. During the reporting period, the task force continued its work to develop a policy on operational datasets, which seeks to outline critical core sets of data needed to support operations and decision-making and sets out the governance arrangements for such datasets. The work involved is closely linked to that of the needs assessment task force of the Committee, which seeks to identify sectoral indicators for needs assessment. The indicators are to be included in a comprehensive database that will serve as a reference tool for humanitarian country teams and will be made available to resident and humanitarian coordinators throughout all phases of an emergency response. The task force has also produced guidance on the collection and use of datasets and has assembled a distance learning course for national and international staff involved in collecting and using data during emergencies.

F. Strengthening evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian operations: needs assessment and analysis

47. Credible, multisectoral needs assessments are essential in improving the effectiveness of aid delivery, in strengthening decision-making and in ensuring that the broad and interrelated needs of beneficiaries are duly considered. During the reporting period, the United Nations and its partners, through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee needs assessment task force, continued efforts to harmonize and promote cross-sector needs assessments, including by developing operational guidance on coordinating assessments in humanitarian crises, which complements a web-based tool box of needs assessment tools and guidance documents. In order to facilitate the sharing and consolidation of needs assessment information within and across clusters, the guidance note also identifies a set of sectoral indicators for measuring needs at different phases following a disaster, as well as the data-collection methodologies that best apply to them.

48. Significant work has also been undertaken by the United Nations and its partners on developing a tool for consolidating and presenting humanitarian information at the multisectoral level. The "humanitarian dashboard" tool is intended to support decision-making by humanitarian country teams and is closely linked to the sectoral indicators identified in the operational guidance note. It also supports cross-cluster analysis and decision-making. Finally, in order to strengthen evidence-based decision-making, the task force has been working to develop needs assessment capacities within the humanitarian community. Task force members have

agreed to develop multisectoral assessment training based on the operational guidance note, to train regional and in-country staff and to develop a roster of needs assessment experts to act in a surge capacity for the field.

G. Effective use of information in the response to disasters

49. During the reporting period, tools for the management of information during disaster response phases were strengthened, including the inter-agency web platform "OneResponse" (see http://oneresponse.info). The platform is a collaborative inter-agency website that will support predictable exchanges of information in emergencies at the country level in order to improve coordination, situational understanding and decision-making. Field testing of the website was conducted in Pakistan in December 2009 and after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. Evaluations of those experiences will be used to ensure that the concept, architecture, technology and implementation processes of the tool meet the needs and requirements of current and future emergencies.

50. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/92, an independent and external review was carried out to assess the value added of and user satisfaction with the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. It was recommended that the Register be discontinued, based on the findings of the review, which concluded that most of the eight directories (Rosters of Disaster Management Expertise; Advanced Technologies for Disaster Response Directory; National Focal Points and Legislation for Customs Facilitation in International Humanitarian Emergency Assistance; Contact Points for Disaster Response; Major Donors of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance; Search and Rescue Directory; Military and Civil Defence Assets Directory; and Emergency Stockpiles of Disaster Relief Items) had not reached potential users as intended. Alternative databases to some of the directories now exist, and potential users in need of emergency information have used bilateral relations, regional mechanisms and appeals to access emergency assistance information. Alternative, more relevant systems, networks and mechanisms have also been developed, which retain certain capacities of the Register. Links will be inserted on the public websites of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide access to accurate emergency assistance information.

V. Progress in strengthening humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters

A. Enhancing capacities for disaster preparedness and response

51. Investing in preparedness lowers the potential economic and human losses that disasters can cause and decreases the time required to mount an effective life-saving response. Lives can be saved and development gains safeguarded when adequate disaster preparedness capacities, including legislation and policy, early warning measures, contingency plans, risk assessments, including hazard analysis, vulnerability and capacity analysis, capacity-building and response procedures, are in place to enable effective responses and early recovery. Building local and national capacity and resilience, and fostering regional and international cooperation, are essential for further strengthening preparedness.

52. The humanitarian community continued to support the strengthening of preparedness capacity at the regional, national and local levels. During the reporting period, the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative continued to provide capacity enhancement services to Governments and the United Nations system. This included workshops to advance disaster risk reduction at the national and regional levels in Jamaica, Kenya and South-Eastern Europe, trainings, a compilation of online capacity assessment tools and development of a toolkit for conducting capacity assessment of national disaster management organizations.

53. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination System continued to work with Member States to enhance their preparedness and response capacity. During the reporting period, disaster response preparedness missions were deployed to Burkina Faso, Comoros and El Salvador. The purpose of the missions was to directly assist Governments in evaluating their national disaster response preparedness plans and to make recommendations for improvement. Specialized support was also provided to a range of countries to identify preparedness gaps and develop minimum preparedness actions.

54. The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group continued efforts to implement agreed international operational standards for urban search and rescue teams that deploy internationally. During the reporting period, it formally evaluated and classified seven international urban search and rescue teams, from Belgium, China, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, Poland and the United Arab Emirates, bringing the total number of classified international urban search and rescue teams to 19. Member States are encouraged to request independent external classification for urban search and rescue teams that they intend to deploy internationally. The Advisory Group intends to enhance international interoperability and the capacity-building of the teams through the declaration to be adopted at its first global meeting, to be held in Kobe, Japan, in September 2010.

55. Humanitarian agencies continued to contribute to common risk analysis through production of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Early Warning/Early Action report, which aims to foster enhanced preparedness and early humanitarian response. The findings of a recent user survey are being used to improve the report, and an inter-agency online platform is now being used to facilitate its production. The report has been distributed to all resident and humanitarian coordinators, who have become increasingly engaged in the process. The analysis contained in the report has also been used to inform recommendations to be discussed by the "emergency directors" network, comprising United Nations agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and non-governmental organizations, which identifies preparedness actions for major and potential humanitarian emergencies.

56. During the reporting period, activity continued in terms of strengthening the capacities of resident and humanitarian coordinators for disaster preparedness and response. Several initiatives were undertaken to familiarize resident and humanitarian coordinators with their roles and responsibilities during disasters and with the tools and services available within the humanitarian system to support them. The initiative included six regional workshops for resident coordinators on emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and issuance of the first handbook for resident and humanitarian coordinators on emergency preparedness and response. Notwithstanding those initiatives, the capacity of most resident

coordinators to fulfil their responsibilities with regard to disaster preparedness remains constrained by a lack of support staff in their offices.

57. The United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continued to promote the implementation of the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance, which are designed to assist States in preparing their legal and institutional arrangements for international disaster assistance. In collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Federation also developed model legislation to assist States in incorporating the recommendations of the guidelines. Regional meetings were also held to endorse different mechanisms for implementation of the guidelines, including the decision by Latin American and Caribbean States (during their third regional meeting on enhancing international humanitarian partnerships, held in Brazil in September 2009) to collaborate with the Federation in setting up a regional compendium of regulatory instruments.

58. Humanitarian actors continued efforts to improve the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian assistance. The minimum standards and indicators of the Sphere Project continued to be widely used and tested, including during the response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. During the reporting period, work continued on revising the Sphere Project *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* handbook through a broad consultative process. The United Nations system has committed to being actively engaged in the revision process, including consultations at the global, regional and country levels. The revised handbook will be launched in the first quarter of 2011.

59. Recognizing that the effects of climate change will increase demands on both humanitarian and developmental systems, relevant agencies have increased efforts to integrate adaptation efforts throughout programming and have increasingly sought to improve resilience to climate variability through capacity development in vulnerable areas. Efforts have included support for Government endeavours to rehabilitate land and water resources in food-insecure areas. Food-for-work initiatives, which involve community-level climate change adaptation activities, are also being used to provide vulnerable households and communities with assets that strengthen their resilience to future climate and economic shocks. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee task force on climate change has continued to facilitate cooperation and capacity-building on climate change adaptation through the systematic sharing of guidance, tools and information and national and regional activities.

B. Financing for disasters associated with natural hazards

60. During the reporting period, the United Nations system and its partner organizations issued five flash appeals for disasters associated with natural hazards. Four, for Burkina Faso, El Salvador, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines, were for disasters resulting from hydro-meteorological hazards. The fifth was issued for Haiti, following the earthquake of 12 January 2010. The total requirements for the flash appeals amounted to more than $1.5 billion. According to the Financial Tracking Service, as at 31 May 2010, more than $913 million, or 60 per cent of the total requested amount, had been raised. Of that amount, more

than $808 million (88 per cent of all funding received for flash appeals during the reporting period) had been received for the Haiti flash appeal. The Central Emergency Response Fund continued to be an important source of funding for all flash appeals, contributing more than $56 million during the reporting period.

61. During the reporting period, the Central Emergency Response Fund provided $112 n ·n for projects related to natural disaster response activity. This represen ·n increase of 25 per cent, from the $84 million committed in the previous re; rting cycle, and accounted for 27 per cent of total allocations from the Fund. The largest single natural disaster allocation in the history of the Fund, $36 million, was allocated to the response to the earthquake in Haiti. The total amount allocated to earthquake responses was $61 million. Allocations were spread fairly evenly across Latin America and the Caribbean ($57.3 million), Asia and the Middle East ($29.4 million) and Africa ($24.3 million). Playing a complementary role to the Fund, the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies allocated a total of $18.35 million to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to support their disaster response operations. Three quarters of those allocations, or $13.9 million, were made as grants to cover the costs of small- or medium-scale operations for which no emergency appeal had been launched.

62. Adequate preparedness for disasters is an essential element of disaster risk reduction. Although there is widespread recognition of the importance of preparedness and its benefits versus costs, it still represents a minute proportion of total activities and funding in humanitarian communities. According to some estimates, preparedness receives as little as 0.7 per cent of total humanitarian funding. Preparedness is also rarely reflected in traditional humanitarian funding mechanisms, such as the consolidated appeals process, and is normally not well funded when it is included. A number of options have been discussed within the humanitarian community to overcome the funding gap and accelerate the strengthening of preparedness in vulnerable countries. These include the possibility of a thematic consolidated appeal focused on preparedness, a concept explored in a study commissioned by Norway; modalities to allow humanitarian actors to access climate change adaptation funding to prepare for climate risks; increased funding through existing mechanisms; and the establishment of either a global fund for disaster preparedness, or small, multi-donor funds in-country. The potential effectiveness of the various options needs to be further analysed and, where warranted, the ideas further developed. Furthermore, more work needs to be undertaken to improve understanding of where funding gaps are most severe and to determine with greater precision the costs of meeting urgent needs.

63. Early recovery in situations of natural disasters continues to be underfunded in both humanitarian and development funding instruments. Humanitarian funding instruments focus predominantly on immediate life-saving interventions, whereas development funding focuses on promoting sustained, long-term socio-economic benefits, and, as a result, transition funding is often overlooked. Efforts to address the funding gap for early recovery continued during the reporting period. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development established a task team on financing and aid architecture to explore how funding to countries transitioning from violent conflict could become more flexible, rapid and predictable. However, more work is required to strengthen transition financing in post-disaster situations. The guidance note entitled

"Including early recovery requirements in flash appeals: a phased approach" has been endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee consolidated appeal process subworking group and is now routinely disseminated in situations where flash appeals are being formulated or revised.

C. Displacement and protection in situations of natural disasters

64. Globally, natural disasters are the greatest cause of internal displacement. The importance of natural disasters and climate change as causes of displacement was recognized in the African Union Kampala Declaration of October 2009 on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa. Disasters create new and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and challenges to the protection of affected persons. Persons internally displaced by disasters are particularly at risk of human rights violations, and that risk increases with the length of displacement. Such violations usually result from inappropriate policies or negligence. Relevant human rights guarantees, as stipulated in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee operational guidelines on human rights and natural disasters, must therefore be taken into account by national and international actors from the outset of the disaster response. Protection is equally relevant in the pre- and post-disaster phases. Measures to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities need to be included in relevant national plans and programmes, such as contingency plans, development programmes and United Nations development assistance frameworks. The protection concerns of displaced populations should also be included in post-disaster needs assessments and in reconstruction plans.

65. Securing durable solutions for internally displaced persons in post-disaster situations is essential in order to re-establish and guarantee their human rights. During the reporting period, humanitarian actors continued efforts to strengthen protection in the context of natural disasters. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee adopted a revised framework for durable solutions, which identifies three ways in which durable solutions can be reached for displaced persons, namely, in terms of their return home, their local integration into the place of displacement or their settlement elsewhere, usually in another part of the country. In order to clarify and strengthen institutional responsibilities, the Committee and the Global Protection Cluster Working Group have developed (and endorsed in July 2010) standard operating procedures for designating a protection lead in situations of natural disaster. The protection standby capacity also increased its support provided to natural disaster situations. A senior Protection Officer was deployed, for the first time at the regional level, to the South Pacific to ensure that protection concerns were included in the emergency response and early recovery phase after the 2009 tsunami.

D. Strengthening gender mainstreaming

66. Humanitarian actors continued their efforts to mainstream gender considerations into all aspects of their work. However, the systematic and effective integration of gender into humanitarian responses has not yet been achieved and much remains to be done. During the reporting period, the gender standby capacity started deployments of advisers at the regional level (Asia-Pacific, Southern and Eastern Africa), in order to assist in the integration of gender issues in disaster

preparedness and response. A workshop aimed at strengthening cooperation between gender and preparedness and response mechanisms in the participating countries was held in Panama. It brought together representatives from Government preparedness and response mechanisms and gender institutions, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations from several Central American countries. The e-learning course, on the theme "Different needs, equal opportunities: increasing effectiveness of humanitarian action for women, girls, boys and men", is also being rolled out to humanitarian partners throughout 2010.

67. During the reporting period, efforts continued to incorporate gender considerations into humanitarian financing. In order to ensure that gender considerations were better taken into account in programming and that expenditure on gender equality programming could be tracked, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee subworking groups on gender and on the consolidated appeals process have developed a "gender marker" tool. The tool analyses whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women, girls, men and boys will benefit equally from it or if it will advance gender equality in another way. It can be used by project design teams to assess and strengthen the gender equality potential of projects in any humanitarian appeal or funding mechanism. The initiative has been piloted in four countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Yemen and Zimbabwe) and work started in April 2010 on supporting consolidated appeals process countries with the integration of the system into the development of their appeals projects. While the initiative currently applies to consolidated appeals process or similar funding processes, it is envisaged that it will be expanded to include flash appeals, which will make it a key tool in disaster response efforts. The integration of the gender marker will be mandatory in 10 areas in the 2011 consolidated appeals process cycle: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, occupied Palestinian territories, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

VI. Recommendations

68. Member States are encouraged to emphasize the importance of early and multi-year commitments to the Central Emergency Response Fund and other United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian financing mechanisms, in order to ensure predictable and timely access to resources for humanitarian emergencies resulting from disasters associated with natural hazards.

69. Member States, the United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are called upon to accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and to place a strong emphasis on the promotion and strengthening of disaster preparedness activities at all levels, in particular in the most vulnerable communities.

70. Member States are encouraged to provide timely, flexible and predictable funding for preparedness and early recovery, including through established humanitarian funding instruments.

71. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are urged to increase the level of human and financial resources provided to humanitarian and resident coordinators for leading and coordinating disaster preparedness and early recovery activities.

72. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are called upon to integrate early recovery into their work across all sectors and thematic areas and to improve the dissemination and application of tools and services for early recovery activities.

73. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are encouraged to increase efforts to strengthen the capacity of local and national actors to undertake disaster preparedness activities.

74. Member States, the United Nations system and both humanitarian and development partners are encouraged to develop further mechanisms to effectively identify, prioritize and address humanitarian needs arising from global challenges and other structural or chronic vulnerabilities that contribute to disaster risk, including through strengthening partnerships and developing clear indicators, coordinated monitoring of vulnerabilities and effective trigger mechanisms for response.

75. Member States are encouraged to support implementation of the Global Framework for Climate Services, in particular through the cooperative collection and exchange of data and methods that are needed for effective humanitarian action.

76. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are encouraged to increase efforts to harmonize and promote cross-sector needs assessments and to make further progress towards joint needs assessments, including by developing tools, methods and procedures that will result in more timely and useful initial rapid assessments.

77. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian partners are encouraged to identify and share critical datasets, indicators and monitoring systems for use in preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery.

78. Member States and the United Nations system are encouraged to support initiatives that address the different impacts of natural disasters on individuals and groups, including through the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors, and to implement gender markers in humanitarian funding mechanisms in order to track funding allocations to gender-based and gender-based violence prevention programming.

79. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian actors are encouraged to take account of the principles and minimum standards outlined in the Sphere Project handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, in their humanitarian actions and disaster responses.

80. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian, development and human rights partners are encouraged to identify protection concerns prior to, during and in the aftermath of a disaster and to address these concerns systematically in preparedness, response and recovery.

81. Member States are encouraged to consider the Inter-Agency Standing Committee operational guidelines on human rights and natural disasters in the implementation of contingency planning, disaster preparedness and response, as well as early recovery and durable solutions, and to work together by studying the experiences of disaster-prone countries and regions in order to reduce the scale, duration and impact of internal displacement in the event of natural disasters.

82. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian actors are encouraged to consider the unique consequences of natural disasters in urban areas, in particular with regard to disaster risk reduction, preparedness and early recovery strategies.

83. Member States are encouraged to increase their legal preparedness for effective disaster management by using the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance and also to consider signing the model customs facilitation agreement to facilitate the import and transit of the relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and other emergencies.

84. Following the findings of the independent and external review regarding the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/92, it is recommended that the Register be discontinued.

85. Member States prone to the risk of earthquakes are encouraged to build an efficient first-response capacity at the national, local and community levels, and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group is called on to support Member States in this regard.